

*Living in the United States:  
Life Skills for Burundian Refugees  
Volume 1*

**A Guide for Facilitators**

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## Introduction

Welcome to *Living in the United States: Life Skills for Burundian Refugees - Volume 1, A Guide for Facilitators*. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) created the life skills materials for Burundian refugees to use as they adjust to their resettlement communities in the United States. USCRI designed these materials for use individually or in groups, and with or without a facilitator. Using the materials in groups with a facilitator, however, enhances the learning experience for participants and encourages further discussion, questions, and participatory activities. The purpose of *A Guide for Facilitators* is to assist you, the facilitator, to use the life skills materials as effectively as possible whether you work at a refugee resettlement agency, another service provider, or you are a volunteer. Thank you for taking the time to use the life skills materials and help Burundian refugees in their adjustment to living in the United States.

## How to Use this Guide

This guide will assist you in explaining and expanding upon the eight life skills topics in Volume 1. The materials are flexible and we encourage you to modify the lesson plans, as well as add your own questions and activities to fit the needs of the participants. In this guide, each topic has a set of objectives, discussion questions, suggestions for further review, and evaluation questions. These are further explained below.

**Objectives** are listed at the beginning of each chapter outlining ideas participants should be familiar with after completing the topic. To best achieve these objectives, we suggest using the *Life Skills* video in combination with the corresponding print materials, group discussion, and other activities.

**Further Review** helps to explain issues in the life skills topics in greater detail and/or cover areas that were not addressed. Facilitators may want to cover these points after watching the video.

**Discussion Questions** are suggested in each chapter to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving, and to help clients relate and apply the topic to their personal lives. Some questions are more useful to ask before watching the video, while some are better suited for discussions during or after watching the video.

**Activities** encourage participants to apply or further explore the topic. Many activities bring lessons into practice through role-play, site visits, or guest speakers. Furthermore, they help participants practice skills that are important to living in the United States. Activities will be most effective when carried out after watching the *Life Skills* video. This is your chance to be creative!

**Evaluation Questions** check participants' understanding of the topic, as well as serve as a checklist for facilitators to rate the effectiveness of the lesson plan. After facilitating each topic, please fill out a Life Skills Evaluation included on the following page to help USCRI evaluate the materials' effectiveness and improve on future resources.



## **TOPIC 1 - THE ROLE OF THE RESETTLEMENT AGENCY**

### **Objectives**

- Identify the resettlement agency's roles and responsibilities
- Understand personal responsibilities
- Explain importance of punctuality, school attendance, repaying IOM travel loan, and self-sufficiency
- Increase awareness of other community resources

### **Further Review**

- How to get to the resettlement agency and public benefits office using public transportation
- Resettlement agency hours and phone number
- Discuss other community resources that are available, such as extended case management services, local service providers, and religious organizations
- Who qualifies for public benefits
- How to apply for benefits
- When/why public benefits may end
- What to do if you lose your job

### **Discussion Topics**

- What services do you expect to receive in the United States?
- What concerns do you have about providing for your family in the United States?
- What is self-sufficiency/independence?
- Is independence valued in your community? In communities in the United States?
- What are your five-year goals? What do you need to do to make them happen?

### **Activities**

- Reading clocks: Use a large, adjustable clock to teach participants about time and punctuality.
- How to notify DHS if you move: Fill out AR-11 form.
- Chart community resources: Use pictures to illustrate who to contact for different needs and how to access them through public transportation.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- What types of things does the resettlement agency help refugees with?
- If you need assistance, who can you go to for help?
- Why is being self-sufficient important?

## **TOPIC 2 – PERSONAL CARE IN THE UNITED STATES**

### **Objectives**

- Identify different personal care products and their use, such as shampoo, deodorant, and toothpaste
- Understand how and when to wash hands
- Learn how to dress appropriately for different weather conditions

### **Further Review**

- Doing laundry: Separating whites and darks, using laundry detergent (powder vs. liquid)

### **Discussion Topics**

- How often should you wash your clothes? Where do you wash them?
- When should you wash your hands? Why is washing your hands so important?
- What would you wear on a very cold day? A rainy day? A warm, sunny day?
- How can you remember which cleaning supplies have which functions (discuss different container shapes, scents, graphics)?

### **Activities**

- Bring in examples of shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, floss, and laundry detergent. Have the group correctly identify the use of each.
- Laundry demonstration.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- When should you wash your hands?
- How do you use shampoo? Laundry detergent?

## **TOPIC 3 - NUTRITION**

### **Objectives**

- Identify healthy foods and develop skills to incorporate them into daily cooking
- Understand the importance of daily activity
- Recognize which foods to limit for adults and children

### **Further Review**

- Food stamps and WIC – eligibility and how to use them
- Obesity and other health problems
- Ways a family can be more active
- Importance of breastfeeding
- How to safely store foods – use of refrigerators, freezers, and shelves

### **Discussion Topics**

- What are your favorite foods/meals?
- What foods do you think are healthy and important to eat?
- What ways can you reduce fat in meals?
- What are “sales” and food store discount cards?

### **Activities**

- Discuss different examples of fruit, vegetables, and grains in daily meals.
- Bring in new and healthy foods to try.
- Translate healthy recipes into Kirundi.
- Work together to create healthy meal ideas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Demonstrate ways to cook/prepare healthy food.
- Field trip: Grocery store.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- What are some healthy foods that you like to eat?
- What are your favorite healthy activities? What are your children’s favorite healthy activities?
- What are some ways you and your family are going to eat and live healthier?

## TOPIC 4 - HEALTH

### **Objectives**

- Identify different ways to stay healthy
- Differentiate between when to go to a clinic and when to go to the hospital
- Understand the importance of taking medicine as directed

### **Further Review**

- Setting up appointments for medical care
- Insurance, Medicaid, Refugee Medical Assistance
- How to use a pharmacy or buy non-prescription medicine
- Family planning
- Using interpreters in a medical setting
- The dangers of combining some medications with alcohol or taking some medicines when pregnant

### **Discussion Topics**

- What can you do after Refugee Medical Assistance coverage expires?
- What can you do to stay healthy (discuss hygiene, healthy eating, check-ups, appropriate clothing, taking medicine)?
- Have you or someone you know experienced problems getting an interpreter at a doctor's office, clinic, or hospital?
- If you determine you need to go to a hospital, how would you get there?

### **Activities**

- Role-play illnesses. Group can identify symptoms and determine whether to go to a doctor's office or hospital.
- Role-play a visit to the doctor's office.
- Identify nearby clinics or doctor's offices participants can easily get to.
- Go over the different options of birth control and how they are used.
- Guest speakers: Nurse, doctor, employee from Medicaid office.
- Field trip: Pharmacy.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- What are some things you can do every day to stay healthy? Every year?
- When should you go to the hospital?
- How will you pay for medical bills?
- What do you do if a doctor's office or hospital refuses to provide an interpreter?
- Why is family planning important?

## **TOPIC 5 – ADJUSTING TO A NEW HOME**

### **Objectives**

- Understand phases of adjustment
- Identify and practice methods for dealing with stress

### **Further Review**

- Burundians may not be familiar with many U.S. laws. For example, spousal abuse, child abuse, and neglect laws.
- Discuss how important equality is in the United States. Men and women are equal, as are people of different ethnicities, origins, and religions.

### **Discussion Topics**

- What are some important aspects of your culture? What makes you proud to be Burundian?
- What are some examples of American culture?
- How can you preserve parts of your culture in the United States?
- What is the role of each family member in your community? Do you think the social structure of families in the United States might be different?
- How are you dealing with stress and adjusting to life in America?
- How are your children adjusting to life in the United States? (This might be an opportunity to discuss parental frustrations with children's behavior and discuss how to help children adjust and deal with stress.)

### **Activities**

- Talk about ways to adjust to life in America.
- List causes and signs of stress, then list various ways to deal with stress.
- Locate appropriate religious organizations, community centers, public parks, and other venues for meeting new people, relieving stress, and sharing culture. Some suggestions are starting a drumming, dancing, or a woman's group, or walking with a friend every day.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- What are the different phases of adjustment? How would you feel during each phase?
- What methods would you use to relieve stress?

## **TOPIC 6 – SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES**

### **Objectives**

- Understand ways to keep children safe
- Understand how to keep the home safe
- Understand what to do in case of a fire
- Identify when to call 911 and when not to

### **Further Review**

- Crossing streets: red lights, green lights, using crosswalks, and checking for traffic
- Fire safety skills: crawl on ground, do not touch door knobs, use of fire extinguisher, and covering mouth and nose when there is smoke
- Do not let children play with fire, matches, or lighters

### **Discussion Topics**

- What are some potential dangers in the home? Outside the home?
- What are ways to protect your family from those dangers?
- If you woke up in the middle of the night and smelled smoke, what would you do?

### **Activities**

- Demonstrate how to lock windows and doors.
- Demonstrate how to test and change batteries in a smoke detector.
- Identify who to contact in case of an issue with the smoke detector.
- Discuss when to call 911 and when not to.
- Role-play an emergency and calling 911.
- Guest speaker: Police officer, fireman.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- If you want to cross the street, what should you do?
- What should you do if a fire starts in your home?
- When should you call 911?

## **TOPIC 7 - HOUSING**

### **Objectives**

- Understand tenant and landlord responsibilities
- Identify appropriate cleaning tools and how often to clean
- Understand ways to prevent and deal with housing problems (pests, plumbing, electricity outage, etc.)
- Know how and where to dispose of trash
- Identify methods of energy conservation

### **Further Review**

- Review a lease
- What to do about pests, such as rodents and roaches, and how to prevent them
- Who to call for issues with electricity, plumbing, heat, or air conditioning
- Location, use, and danger of electrical outlets
- Location and use of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers
- Discuss noises they may hear in their neighborhoods, such as emergency vehicles and smoke alarms

### **Discussion Topics**

- What can you do if your landlord does not fulfill his/her obligations?
- Where should you go if you need new furniture?
- What are some problems that might happen in a house? How can you fix them?
- How can you save money on utility bills?
- What are some ways you can be a good neighbor?

### **Activities**

- Demonstrate using a stove, oven, washing machine, and clothes dryer.
- Demonstrate using a mop and vacuum, how to clean windows, counters, oven, refrigerator, and bathroom.
- Develop weekly check list of ways to keep the house/apartment clean.
- Prepare a meal demonstrating hygienic food preparation, clean-up, and storage.
- Identify different cleaning products, how to use them, and where to store them safely.
- Help participants identify trash cans and dumpsters, and address recycling if available.
- Separate junk mail from mail. Highlight indicators of important mail – red letters, bills, notices, and recognizing the sender.
- Guest speaker: Landlord.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- Why is having a clean home important?
- What is your plan to keep your home clean?
- Can you tell me how to use this cleaning product?
- What kind of problems should you talk to your landlord about?
- What are things you should do when you are planning to move out of your home?

## **Topic 8 - EMPLOYMENT**

### **Objectives**

- Understand the importance of employment
- Identify applicable job skills and what jobs you can expect
- Be familiar with the job application process
- Describe employers' expectations
- Identify ways to find a job

### **Further Review**

- Examples of jobs currently available to you
- Your state's minimum wage
- What to do if you are fired or decide to quit your job
- Applying for unemployment benefits
- Understanding tax forms – saving pay stubs, filling out W-4s at work, saving W-2s for tax time.  
\*Note to facilitators: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) provides free tax help to low-income individuals (under \$35,000). The IRS also provides an online training course on how to help low-income earners fill out 1040, 1040A, and 1040 EZ forms.
- Employment rights and responsibilities
- Sexual harassment in the workplace

### **Discussion Topics**

- Why is having a job important?
- How can you find a job?
- If you are offered a job, what questions should you ask your employer?
- How would you react if your boss was a man or a woman? Someone younger than you?
- If you are having problems at work, who should you talk to?
- What are your personal/professional goals? What are some ways to achieve them?
- What are some barriers to satisfactory employment? How can you overcome them?

### **Activities**

- Make a list of participants' skills and identify corresponding jobs.
- Practice filling out job application forms.
- Role-play job interviews.
- Map out a career plan. Use this to illustrate the importance of good work skills, reliability, creating job history, and giving two weeks' notice to your employer.
- Guest Speaker: Manager of a company that employs refugees. The speaker may want to cover a typical work day, employee rights and responsibilities, tips for finding a job, doing well in the interview, and being a good employee.

### **Evaluation Questions**

- Why is having a job important?
- How can you find a job?
- What are characteristics that make you a good employee?